

Lucernemines Coke Works  
Rochester & Pittsburgh Coal & Iron Company  
.2 miles E of Lucerne  
Lucerne Vicinity  
Indiana  
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-264

HAER  
PA,  
32-LUCE.V,  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

LUCERNEMINES COKE WORKS

HAER No. PA-264

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PA  
32-LUCE.V  
1-

Location: .2 miles East of Lucerne, adjacent to Yellow Creek, Northeast of Homer City, Lucerne Vicinity, Center Township, Indiana County, Pennsylvania

USGS Quad: Indiana (1:24000)  
UTM: 17/657375/4491150

Date of Construction: 1952

Builder: Rochester & Pittsburgh Coal Company

Present Owner: Shenango, Inc.

Present Use: Abandoned

Significance: The Rochester & Pittsburgh Coal Company ovens at Lucerne is the most intact coke-processing complex of the historic Indiana County coal industry.

Project Information: In February 1987, the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) and the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) began a multi-year historical and architectural documentation project in southwestern Pennsylvania. Carried out in conjunction with America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), HAER undertook a comprehensive inventory of Blair, Cambria, Fayette, and Indiana counties as the first step in identifying the region's surviving historic engineering works and industrial resources.

The results of this project have been published in Indiana County, Pennsylvania: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites (1993), edited by Ken Rose and produced by HABS/HAER for the National Park Service.

Compiler: Richard Quinn, Historian

History:

**DESCRIPTION:** Three tipples survive from a large coke processing facility built and operated by the Rochester and Pittsburgh Coal Company at Lucerne (or Lucernemines). Although the mines at Lucerne were established in 1907 and 1908, little remains of the vast mining complex, except for the relatively recent coking plant, erected in 1952. The oldest of the three surviving tipples here is of particular interest. The steel-framed structure contains four tapering square vats mounted high on the frames. Coal was fed into them via a tracked conveyor extending from a car shaker unloader. It then passed by gravity downward through agitating screens into waiting tipple cars, still present on the track at the tipple base. A catwalk, reached by a metal ladder, extends across the north side.

The tipple cars, four in number to match the four vats in the tipple, were obviously designed for the tipple and accompanying coke oven complex. They are of braced sheet steel construction, V-shaped, and rest on four-wheel trucks. Feeder arms extending from the sides would drop the screened coal into the trunnel holes of the nearby coke ovens. The tipple was connected to an adjacent battery of 264 coke ovens by a wood-and-metal open deck trestle, no longer extant.

Two newer tipples, apparently dating from the 1960s, stand approximately 400 yards west. These may have been built after the older coke oven works was sold to Shenango, Inc., in 1957. The two share interconnected conveyor systems bringing the coal from the mines; each may have screened different sizes of coal, requiring the coal to pass through each before the minimum size was separated. Rails on the tracks below are marked "U.S.Steel" with several dates, all from the 1950s and 1960s.

Also on the site is a hopper car shaker unloader. The shaker is a steel structure, roughly 60' x 20' in dimension, designed to accommodate coal hopper cars from the mines or from other sites. The base is an open grate with tapering vat which fed the coal to an accompanying conveyor which took the dropped coal to the top of an adjacent tipple. A partially enclosed operator station and catwalk is located on the south side, and a gantry crane runs on a track overhead. An inscription on the collapsed agitator identifies the structure as a "Robins Car Shakeout."

**HISTORY:** The relatively recent Rochester & Pittsburgh Coal Company works at Lucerne is the most intact coke-processing complex of the historic Indiana County coal industry. The coking complex was built by the R&P in 1952 at a cost of over \$2 million. R&P operated the complex only until 1957, when it was sold to Shenango, Inc. Shenango continued to operate the ovens complex until the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources forced its closure in 1972. The complex was simply abandoned and has not been dismantled; even the unique loading cars remain on the tracks below the oldest tipple. The trestle connecting that tipple with the coke ovens has been removed. The car shakeout stands to its side.

Sources:

Cooper, Eileen Mountjoy. *Rochester & Pittsburgh Coal Company: The First One Hundred Years*. Indiana, PA: Rochester & Pittsburgh Coal Company, 1982.

Frampton, Tracy Edwin and Jodie Molnar Hedrick. Pennsylvania Historical Resource Survey Form O63-WH-18. Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, Bureau for Historical Preservation, Harrisburg. Copies at Indiana County Office of Planning and Development, Indiana, Pennsylvania.

"New Coke Ovens in Operation at Lucerne." *Indiana Gazette*, 23 October 1952.